

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 OMB-01 OPR-02 SY-10

PPT-02 SCA-01 PC-15 NIC-01 EUR-25 DRC-01 /209 W

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P R 162055Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5564

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 4078

PANAMA PLEASE PASS AMB VAKY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CS

SUBJECT: FIGUERES ATTACKS SQUATTER

INVASION IN PACIFIC SOUTH

REF: SAN JOSE 4048

SUMMARY: IN A TELEVISION SPEECH NOVEMBER 15 PRESIDENT  
FIGUERS ATTACKED COMMUNIST AGITATORS  
WHO HE SAID HAVE INSPIRED SQUATTERS  
ON PRIVATE FARMS TO DISOBEY THE LAW AND FORCEFULLY  
CONFRONT THE GOVERNMENT. FIGUERES EXPLAINED  
THE LEGAL REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO THE LEGITIMATE  
SQUATTERS AND THREATENED TO OUTLAW THE COMMUNIST

PARTY FROM THE ELECTIONS IF  
IF DID NOT RESPECT THE COUNTRY'S  
INSTITUTIONS. FIGUERES' MOTIVES FOR DRAMATICALLY  
RAISING THIS ISSUE TO PUBLIC ATTENTION ARE NOT  
ALTOGETHER UNDERSTOOD BUT SELF-INTEREST  
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AND POLITICS ARE LIKELY A PART OF IT. END

SUMMARY.

1. IN A ONE-HOUR NATIONAL TELEVISION HOOK-UP ADDRESS REMINISCENT OF HIS OCTOBER 3 SPEECH AGAINST UNION DISTURBANCES, PRESIDENT FIGUERES ON NOVEMBER 15 AGAIN PULLED OUT ALL THE STOPS TO APPRISE THE COSTA RICAN PUBLIC OF COMMUNIST AGITATION BEHIND THE SQUATTER INVASION OF PRIVATE FARMS NEAR THE PANAMANIAN BORDER. FIGUERES EXPLAINED THE BACKGROUND OF THE SQUATTERS' SITUATION IN THE LA VACA FARM, THE FOCUS OF THE TROUBLE. HE TOLD ABOUT SOME 400 SQUATTER FAMILIES WHO HAVE REFUSED TO MOVE FROM THE FARM DESPITE THE LEGAL INTERVENTION OF THE COSTA RICAN LAND SETTLEMENT INSTITUTO (ITCO). HE WENT ON TO POINT OUT THAT ABOUT 60 OF THESE FAMILIES ARE LEGITIMATE SQUATTERS WITH THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE GOVERNMENT COMPENSATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENTS THEY HAVE MADE ON THE PROPERTY. FIGUERES VEHEMENTLY CRITICIZED THE COMMUNISTS FOR 1) ENCOURAGING AND BACKING THE SQUATTERS TO DISOBEY THE LAW BY REMAINING ON THE PROPERTY; AND 2) FOR BRINGING ILLEGITIMATE SQUATTERS (INVASORES) INTO THE AREA TO SHARPEN THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT. IN A SCARCELY VEILED THREAT TO OUTLAW THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PASO) FROM THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS, FIGUERES SAID THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO APPLY ARTICLE 98 OF THE CONSTITUTION. (ARTICLE 98 OUTLAWS POLITICAL PARTIES THAT ".....INTEND TO DESTROY THE BASES OF DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION IN COSTA RICA .....")

2. FIGUERES ADDED THAT COSTA RICA IS NOT GOING TO BECOME ANOTHER CUBA, ADDING THAT THE COMMUNISTS KNOW THAT "I AM AGAINST THE IMPOSITION OF IDEAS BY FORCE". HE WENT ON TO DECLARE THAT, CONTRARY TO SOME ALLEGATIONS, NEITHER THE AMERICAN NOR THE RUSSIAN EMBASSIES OR ANY OF THEIR OFFICIALS HAVE IN ANY WAY BEEN

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INVOLVED IN THE AFFAIR.

3. COMMENT: FIGUERES' PERFORMANCE PARALLELED HIS OCTOBER 3 SPEECH IN THE WAY HE ESSENTIALLY APPEALED TO COSTA RICANS TO STAND FIRM AGAINST POLITICALLY MOTIVATED DISTURBANCES THAT THREATEN THE COUNTRY'S INSTITUTIONS. WITHOUT BENEFIT YET OF MEDIA COMMENT, IT CANALMOST

CERTAINLY BE SAID THAT PUBLIC REACTION TO THE SPEECH WILL BE FAVORABLE. THUS IT WILL HAVE SERVED ONCE AGAIN TO IMPROVE THE PLN ADMINISTRATION'S SPOTTY PUBLIC IMAGE.

4. THERE ARE SOME NAGGING QUESTIONS, HOWEVER, WITH REGARD TO THE EVENT AT LA VACA THAT MOTIVATED DON PEPE'S DISCOURSE. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THIS SQUATTER INCIDENT, WHILE NUMERICALLY A LARGE ONE, DOES NOT SEEM TO BE PARTICULARLY MORE SERIOUS THAN SEVERAL OTHERS THAT HAVE OCCURRED DURING THE PAST YEAR OR SO. THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE'S PERSONAL LAND INVESTMENTS IN THE AREA, AND PERHAPS DON PEPE'S TOO, MAY WELL HAVE BEEN A FACTOR IN PROVOKING THE PRESIDENT'S IRE. ALSO, AN APPARENT GROWING ESTRANGEMENT OF THE PLN FROM THE COMMUNISTS MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE HARSHNESS OF FIGUERES' ATTACK AND HIS IMPLIED THREAT TO INVOKE ARTICLE 98.

5. SO FAR THE THREE PLATOONS OF CIVIL GUARDS TRUCKED URGENTLY TO THE ZONE ON NOVEMBER 14 HAVE NOT BEEN MOVED TO CONFRONT THE SQUATTERS, NOR HAVE THERE BEEN ANY REPORTS OF VIOLENCE. HOWEVER, AN APPARENTLY UNCONNECTED MURDER OF A CIVIL GUARD MEMBER NOVEMBER 15 ON US INTEREST-OWNED OSA FORRESTAL PROPERTY, ITSELF THE OBJECT OF PERENNIAL SQUATTER PROVOCATION, HAS HEIGHTENED PUBLIC CONCERN OVER WHAT IS HAPPENING.  
LANE

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